

Dereham Heritage Trust Annual Report 2025

Charity name: Dereham Heritage Trust (DHT), number 1187140

Address for correspondence:

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Trustees:

Hilary Williams

Catherine Hawkins

Ken Hawkins

Robena Brown

Sue Rockley

Jane Heyburn

Katie Goodman

Caroline Rawlings

Structure

Dereham Heritage Trust is managed by the Trustees, who meet as a committee every month. During 2025, they have been supplemented by Sara Flatt joining the committee. In practice, the need for a vote has been very rare, so the non Trustee committee member has taken a full part in all discussions and decisions. There is generally little turnover of Trustees (no changes in 2025) and a full complement has been available throughout the year. Should vacancies occur, replacements would initially be sought from the wider membership of DHT. The Trust currently has just under 100 members.

Activities and objectives

The objects of the CIO are to advance the education of the public in the archaeology and history of Dereham and the CIO's environs, including through:

- i the support and encouragement of the preservation and conservation of ancient buildings and monuments;
- ii the provision of Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum and Dereham Archive Centre; and
- iii the development, care and conservation of the CIO's collections.

The Trust staffs Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum (Dereham's local history museum) to open it to the public; maintains the Town Archive; carries out local and family history research; hosts a popular monthly talks programme; and produces a quarterly research and local interest newsletter for members.

Details of 2025 activities are given below, as reported to the members at the AGM held on 11 March 2026.

Finances

The accounts for 2025, as checked by an Independent Examiner are appended, together with explanatory notes. These too were presented to, and approved by, the AGM.

Report made to members at the AGM on 11 March 2026

Introduction

We have enjoyed a most successful year with many visitors to the Museum, themed events, special visits and of course our popular monthly meetings. Our dinner at Beeston Ploughshare was most enjoyable. Our success is thanks to our committee members and our willing group of volunteers.

Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum

Our visitor numbers were particularly rewarding with 590 adults and 154 children who all appreciated learning about Dereham's heritage both during our normal opening hours and

our special event days. Our Heritage Open Days welcomed 206 adults and 27 children on two busy weekends. Our Museum did not close once during the season of 66 sessions staffed by our volunteers and arranged by Catherine Hawkins. Our themed events organised by Katie Goodman brought many people to the Museum for the first time.

Our visitors have enjoyed the excellent displays planned by Jane Heyburn and Katie Goodman. These have included our celebration of the 80th anniversary of VJ Day which included moving accounts by soldiers of the Norfolk Regiment who served in the Far East. In addition, we facilitated a display to show the centenary of Brian Aldiss who also served in the Far East. Our display on the Corn Hall showed the transition of the building into a live music venue and then a cinema and led to much reminiscing by our local visitors. Jane and Katie have made plans for our 2026 season with new displays including the history and development of sport in Dereham. There will also be a smaller display about the Temperance movement in Dereham. We shall continue updating and modernising our display boards adding new information and refreshing our more permanent displays.

The popular mouse trail will continue as will the handling box. The rooms will stay the same but with care given to repositioning of artefacts. The Anne Coe room always triggers interesting discussions.

Sara Flatt keeps an expert eye on our BBCM building which is a great help.

Special Visits

We have enjoyed six special visits this year from Fred Nicholson School, Dereham Ladies Circle, Aylsham History Society, Norwich Historic Buildings Group, Probus group and the Beavers. These have involved 74 adults and 36 children who have come to enjoy our Museum. We are grateful to Canon Paul Cubitt for his excellent Church tours which mean our adult visitors enjoy both St Nicholas' Church and our Museum.

Assembly Rooms

We were able to open the Assembly Rooms on Heritage Open Days, courtesy of our Town Council. 187 adults and 15 children visited and enjoyed the beautiful displays arranged by Jane and Katie and staffed by our volunteers. Dereham residents are particularly interested in the ballroom which was later the courtroom. More on this later in the report!

The Archive Centre

We continue to be greatly in need of extra space for our valuable archive which houses bound volumes of the Dereham and Fakenham Times. Our artefacts are true treasures of Dereham which we carefully preserve. Heavier items continue to pose a problem for us. We rent an attic room in Church House by kind permission of Canon Cubitt. We continue to hunt for suitable storage space for our treasures.

Items purchased in 2025 were:

- H H Aldiss sheet of pins as sold in their drapery shop in the High Street.
- Godfrey Edition reprint of the 1926 Ordnance Survey map of Dereham.
- Printed postcard of the award winning 1926 East Dereham Cricket Club.

Items donated included:

- 1930s Swallow gent's bicycle.
- John Rowe gentleman's outfitters of Church Street shop sign with photograph of Mr Rowe.
- Large prints of St Nicholas' Church and Dereham views.
- Large archive of Savory family members who all worked for Dereham Post Office including photographs, newspaper cuttings and WWI medals.
- Many digital publications passed to us from Tom Garland of the Mid Norfolk Family History Society both for our information and to sell copies on Parish Chest.
- Newhaven Court book donated by our speaker Helen Murray.

- 1880s Victorian family photograph of the Pells and Campling families of Dereham and beyond, plus other photos and information about Pells related local families.
- Many historically valuable books from the extensive library of historians and publishers David and Susan Yaxley of Stibbard.

Robena Brown tried very hard to buy John Fenn's original hand-written manuscripts of the Paston Letters at a Norfolk auction. However deeper pockets than ours prevailed. Had these been secured for the Trust we would have had an archive of national, if not international, significance together with what we already hold. These precious manuscripts were fortunately bought by an 'academic institution'

Visit from Radio Norfolk

In June we enjoyed a visit from a reporter from BBC Norfolk's Chris Goreham breakfast show featuring the 'Where Am I' quiz. Our visitor was most impressed by our museum especially the section on the Corn Hall. He recounted how his mother walked barefoot and in flower power dress to see Jimmy Hendrix perform. The visit was a special time for her.

Monthly talks

These talks are an important feature of DHT for both learning and meeting our members. We have enjoyed talks on Newhaven Court, Thomas Fowell Buxton, Norfolk and the Mayflower plus Stones, Bones and Herbs on treating ailments in Medieval times. Our thanks go to Sue Rockley for arranging these evenings and to Katie Goodman for her invaluable Facebook advertising.

Publications

We are grateful to Susanna Wade Martins and Gordon Olley for their booklet on the Corn Hall which later became the cinema. The booklet has been much appreciated especially in this 100th anniversary year of the cinema.

DHT had previously agreed to publish and print Norma Virgoe's book on the history of Methodism in Dereham. Norma is a well-known Norfolk historian who has written many books about the history of Methodism in the county. She supplied the final draft of the 110 page book and we liaised with the printer to produce this fascinating book. DHT paid for the total print run and launched sales at Katie's book sale in BBCM in November. It will not disappoint as there is a wealth of local history within and beyond Methodism in the book. It is an absorbing read and copies are available both in the museum and at our evening meetings.

Community Engagement

14 February A Very Victorian Crafternoon in Dereham library inspired by Victorian Valentine's Day cards in the DHT collection. 22 adults and 23 young people attended.

2 May Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum Grand Opening sponsored by Orion Cinema celebrating 100 years of Dereham Cinema and the publication of our booklet on the Corn Hall. 67 people walked along the red carpet into the Museum to meet co-author Gordon Olley. All enjoyed refreshments in St Nicholas' Church afterwards.

10 May Dereham Day. Our DHT stand featured a book signing by Gordon Olley and a specially curated display showcasing the history of Dereham Neatherd High School to celebrate the new Dereham Day venue.

12 July We had a stand at Wendling Village Fete with a selection of photographs which prompted considerable interest.

26 July Digging Dereham. As part of the Council for British Archaeology's Festival of Archaeology the Museum was transformed as it was filled with different stations with very interested children trying out their archaeological skills. It was a joy to interact with many

young people who were so enthusiastic. 130 people attended to enjoy mini excavations, object handling, a treasure hunt and Roman mosaic crafts.

5 August The Big Community Bunting Crafternoon to decorate the Museum and the churchyard for VJ Day. We ended up with 100 metres of bunting!

15 August VJ Day. We received a £250 grant from Breckland Council which enabled us to join with other organisations to commemorate Victory over Japan Day. 52 adults and 6 children engaged in all the different activities and learning about the Norfolk Regiment in the Far East.

23 August Bonnie Takeover Day. Over 60 people joined our Museum mascot as she took over the Museum for a day of mousey mayhem with mouse-themed events and a fun cinema-themed mouse hunt. Much fun was enjoyed by all.

30 August Dencora Family Fun Day. We joined other organisations in the Ellenor Fenn Garden for a free family fun day with local crafters, entertainment and activities for children.

12-20 September There was free entry in to both the Museum and the Assembly Rooms. In the latter we had an exclusive exhibition to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen with a Regency Era fashion display and an exhibition on William Cowper. He was Jane Austen's favourite poet and this interest was encouraged by her father.

13 September Pot of Gold Shanty Crew in St Nicholas Church. This concert raised over £400 to be shared between DHT and St Nicholas' Church.

22 November The Big Dereham Book Sale. This event turned the ground floor of BBCM into a book lover's paradise with bargain books of all genres, a free book mark and children's activities. Over 120 people attended raising £480 for DHT.

Special Mentions

In 2025 the DHT Facebook page grew from 331 followers to 518.

The Community Exhibition Wall in BBCM allowed us to work with five local community groups to showcase the work they are doing in Dereham: Forget Me Not Golf (Dereham), Dereham Community Crafters, Dereham Ladies Circle, Dereham Cancer Care and Dereham Aid Centre.

The winners of Neatherd High School's *My Dereham* art competition had their work displayed in BBCM this summer.

Our thanks go to Katie Goodman for her expertise and enthusiasm which made these special Museum events possible. Katie also made beautiful decorations for our tree at the Christmas Tree Festival at St Nicholas' Church at the end of November. Katie, Catherine and I spent an enjoyable morning decorating the tree which attracted much attention during the course of the week.

A Heritage Centre for Dereham

We continue our efforts to find suitable premises for such a centre and we are grateful to Caroline Rawlings for her work on this. We shall carry on our search and keep you posted.

Hilary Williams, Chair

Accounts are recorded on the next page

Dereham Heritage Trust

Accounts 2025

Museum and Archive			note
2024	Income	2025	
1170.57	Admissions	952.28	1
166.21	Donations	234.88	1
117.75	Sales	384.02	2
1000.00	Grant	1650.00	3
2454.53		3221.18	
Expenditure			
438.59	Utilities and services	721.58	4
1706.29	Maintenance	428.65	5
400.73	Purchases and acquisitions	336.39	6
19.84	IT	1318.16	7
299.00	Subscriptions	305.00	
271.83	Publicity	247.00	
0.00	Cost of sales	35.00	
70.00	Volunteer support and training	123.87	
0.00	Admin	0.00	
99.31	Insurance	99.31	
3305.59		3614.96	
-851.06	Surplus/Deficit	-393.78	
Trust			
2024	Income	2025	
985.00	Subscriptions	928.00	
819.92	Door takings	876.00	
56.50	Sales	191.44	8
927.10	Donations	8928.35	9
2788.52		10923.79	
Expenditure			
591.50	Hall hire	370.00	10
713.10	Speakers	445.00	11
88.52	Refreshments	14.84	
184.73	Newsletter	495.63	12
0.81	Community work	682.86	3
1578.66		2008.33	
1209.86	Surplus/Deficit	8915.46	
2024	Summary totals (surplus/deficit)	2025	
-851.06	Museum and Archive	-393.78	
1209.86	Trust	8915.46	
358.80	Surplus/Deficit	8521.68	
Total funds available			
17386.44	Current account balance at 1 January	17745.24	
358.80	Plus surplus/less deficit for year	8521.68	
0.00	Deposit account balance at 31 December	15000.00	13
17745.24	Current account balance at 31 December	11266.92	13

I have examined the above Accounts and the supporting documents provided to me and confirm that they fairly reflect the transactions of the Trust for the year and the position at 31 December 2025

Signed *signed copy available for inspection*
(Jim Stebbings)

Date 22 January 2026